

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1           1. A system comprising:

2               a. means, coupled to a network, for maintaining participant information comprising  
3 an identifier of a first participant;

4               b. means, coupled to the network, for scheduling a conference, the conference  
5 being scheduled with the identifier of the first participant;

6               c. a first site comprising a first means for coordinating a conference coupled to the  
7 network; and a plurality of first means for participating in a conference coupled to the network; and

8               d. a second site comprising a second means for coordinating a conference coupled  
9 to the network; and a plurality of second means for participating in a conference coupled to the  
10 network; wherein:

11               e. the first means for coordinating provides a first notice of a conference; notice  
12 being provided for assuring participation by the first participant at a particular first means for  
13 participating identified in the first notice; and

14               f. the second means for coordinating provides a second notice of the conference for  
15 assuring participation by a second participant at a particular second means for participating  
16 identified in the second notice.

1           2. The system of claim 1 wherein:

2               a. the means for maintaining participant information further comprises an identifier  
3 of the second participant;

4               b. the means for scheduling schedules the conference with the identifier of the  
5 second participant; and

6               c. the second notice comprises the identifier of the second participant.

1           3. The system of claim 1 wherein the means for maintaining participant information  
2 comprises a jail management system and the identifier of the first participant identifies a prisoner  
3 of the jail.

1           4. The system of claim 3 wherein the second identifier identifies a visitor.

1 5. A system comprising:

2 a. means for communicating as a network;

3 b. a plurality of means for participating in a conference coupled to the means for  
4 communicating, the plurality arranged with at least one site having a multiplicity of particular  
5 means for participating of the plurality; and

6 c. means for coordinating a conference coupled to the means for communicating  
7 and located at the site, wherein the means for coordinating provides notice to a participant for  
8 directing the participant to a particular means for participating.

1 6. A system comprising:

2 a. means for communicating as a network;

3 b. means for operating a database comprising participant location information; the  
4 means for operating coupled to the means for communicating; and

5 c. a plurality of sites, each site comprising:

6 (1) a respective multiplicity of first means, coupled to the means for  
7 communicating, for participating in a conference; and

8 (2) a respective second means for coordinating a conference, the second  
9 means physically distinct from the first means, the second means coupled to the means for  
10 communicating; wherein

11 d. notice is provided to a participant to attend a conference, notice being provided  
12 by a particular means for coordinating of a particular site determined in accordance with the  
13 database to be nearest the participant at a time prior to the conference.

1 7. The system of claim 6 wherein the means for coordinating is operated by a person to  
2 provide the notice, operation being without action by the participant.

1 8. The system of claim 6 wherein the means for coordinating is operated by a coordinator.

1 9. A system for conducting a conference, the system comprising:

2 a. means for communicating as a network; and

3           b. a plurality of means for coupling, each means being for coupling a respective  
4 plurality of participant stations to the means for communicating; wherein each means for coupling  
5 comprises:

6                   (1) means for storing respective indicia of the conference, wherein indicia  
7 of the conference comprise a start time and identification of participant stations of the respective  
8 plurality for the conference; and

9                   (2) means for initiating communication to conduct the conference,  
10 communication being with the identified participant station; initiating being aborted if a signal is  
11 not received by the means for initiating from the identified participant station within a period after  
12 the start time.

1           10. The system of claim 9 wherein the participant station comprises means for detecting  
2 beginning use of the station by a participant; and the signal is provided by the means for detecting  
3 when use by a participant is detected.

1           11. The system of claim 9 wherein:

2                   a. the participant station comprises means for detecting beginning use of the station  
3 by a participant;

4                   b. the indicia of the conference further includes identification of a participant; and

5                   c. the signal is provided by the means for detecting when use is begun by the  
6 participant identified to the station in accordance with the indicia of the conference.

1           12. The system of claim 9 wherein the participant station comprises a handset and a hook  
2 switch; and the signal is provided in accordance with operation of the hook switch.

1           13. A database for at least one of planning, conducting, and recording a conference, the  
2 database comprising:

3                   a. means for associating a conference identifier, a participant identifier, and indicia  
4 of a physical location where the participant is expected for participation in the conference  
5 corresponding to the conference identifier; and

6 b. means for accessing the association to accomplish at least one of planning,  
7 conducting, and recording the conference.

1 14. The database of claim 13 wherein the participant is at least one of an inmate, a visitor  
2 of the inmate, and a judge.

1 15. The database of claim 14 wherein the database further comprises:

2 a. second means for associating the identifier of the participant, an identifier of a  
3 visitor, and indicia of a relationship of the participant and the visitor; wherein

4 b. the indicia of relationship describes at least one of a familial, employment,  
5 representation, religious, and social relations.

1 16. A database for at least one of planning, conducting, and recording a conference, the  
2 database comprising:

3 a. means for associating a conference identifier, an equipment identifier, and indicia  
4 of a physical location where the equipment is expected for participation in the conference  
5 corresponding to the conference identifier; and

6 b. means for accessing the association to accomplish at least one of planning,  
7 conducting, and recording the conference.

1 17. A method for conducting a conference via a system having a plurality of sites, each site  
2 including a multiplicity of participant stations and a control station, the system further comprising a  
3 database for maintaining a tuple including a conference identifier, an identifier of a participant, and  
4 an identifier of a participant station, the method comprising:

5 a step for obtaining a notice at the control station of a site, the notice comprising the  
6 conference identifier, the identifier of a participant, and the identifier of a participant station; and

7 a step for directing a participant to a participant station in accordance with the notice,  
8 the participant corresponding to the identifier of the participant, the participant station  
9 corresponding to the identifier of the participant station.

1 18. The method of claim 17 wherein the participant performs the step for obtaining at a self  
2 service station coupled to the network, the self service station comprising the control station.

1 19. The method of claim 17 wherein a conference coordinator performs the step for  
2 directing.

1 20. The method of claim 19 wherein the notice in the step for obtaining comprises notice  
2 for a plurality of participants to be advised by the conference coordinator.

1 21. The method of claim 17 wherein the notice in the step for obtaining comprises notice  
2 for a plurality of scheduled conferences involving the participant.

1 22. A method for conducting a conference via a system having a multiplicity of participant  
2 stations and a control station, the system further comprising a database for maintaining a tuple  
3 including a conference identifier, an identifier of a participant station, and an identifier of a  
4 participant, the method comprising:

5 a step for detecting the unavailability of a first participant station of the multiplicity;

6 a step for detecting the availability of an alternate participant station of the  
7 multiplicity;

8 a step for obtaining confirmation that the alternate participant station is to be used in  
9 the conference corresponding to the conference identifier;

10 a step for revising the tuple to exclude the first participant station and to include an  
11 identifier of the alternate participant station to reschedule the conference;

12 a step for obtaining at the control station a notice that the conference associated with  
13 the conference identifier is to commence, the notice in accordance with the revised tuple; and

14 a step for directing a participant corresponding to the identifier of the participant to  
15 the alternate participant station in accordance with the notice.

1 23. The method of claim 22 wherein the step for detecting unavailability comprises at least  
2 one of:

3 a step for comparing a signal from a microphone to a first threshold to determine  
4 unavailability;

5 a step for analyzing a signal to noise ratio of a signal from a microphone to  
6 determine unavailability;

7 a step for comparing a signal from a camera to a second threshold to determine  
8 unavailability; and

9 a step for analyzing a signal to noise ratio of a signal from a camera to determine  
10 unavailability.

1 24. The method of claim 24 wherein the step for detecting availability comprises:

2 a step for assuring that the notice will be timely as provided in accordance with at  
3 least one of a transit time and a notification time associated with at least one of the identifier of the  
4 participant and the identifier of the alternate participant station.

1 25. The method of claim 24 wherein the step for detecting unavailability comprises:

2 a step for detecting at least one of the unavailability of the participant associated  
3 with the identifier of the participant and the unavailability of the first participant station in response  
4 to detecting a change in value of at least one of a transit time and a notification time associated  
5 with at least one of the identifier of the participant and the identifier of the first participant station.

1 26. A method for conducting a conference via a system having a multiplicity of participant  
2 stations and a control station, the system further comprising a database for maintaining a first tuple  
3 and a second tuple, the first tuple relating a conference identifier, an identifier of a participant  
4 station, and an identifier of a participant, the second tuple relating the identifier of the participant  
5 and a location of the participant, the method comprising:

6 a step for detecting a revision of the second tuple; and

7 a step for rescheduling the conference in accordance with the revised second tuple.

1 27. The method of claim 26 wherein the step for rescheduling comprises a step for  
2 canceling the conference corresponding to the conference identifier of the first tuple.

1           28. A method for conducting a conference via a system, the system including a multiplicity  
2 of participants and a database for maintaining a tuple of a conference identifier and an identifier of  
3 a first participant, the method comprising:

4                 a step for detecting the unavailability of a participant corresponding to the identifier  
5 of the first participant;

6                 a step for detecting the availability of an alternate participant; and

7                 a step for revising the tuple to exclude the identifier of the first participant and to  
8 include an identifier of the alternate participant, to reschedule the conference.

1           29. The method of claim 28 wherein the first participant is at least one of a human  
2 participant, an equipment participant, a data participant, and a recorder channel.

1           30. A method for scheduling a conference in accordance with a request, the request  
2 comprising indicia of a plurality of participants and a start time, the method comprising:

3                 a step for maintaining for each participant of the plurality a respective first list of  
4 future times;

5                 a step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective sublist of the  
6 first list including times after the start time;

7                 a step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective second list of  
8 unavailable times;

9                 a step for intersecting for each participant of the plurality the respective first list  
10 and the respective second list to form a respective availability list;

11                 a step for intersecting all participant availability lists to form an opportunity list;

12 and

13                 a step for scheduling the conference in accordance with a selected item of the  
14 opportunity list.

1           31. The method of claim 30 wherein:

2                 a. the step for scheduling comprises a step for posting to a database a record  
3 comprising a conference start time; and

b. the step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective second list of unavailable times comprises a step for obtaining a query result from the database.

32. The method of claim 30 wherein the step for forming a respective second list comprises a step for assuring that times associated with lower ranking conferences are not excluded from the second list.

33. The method of claim 30 for scheduling a first conference further comprising a step for rescheduling a second conference after scheduling the first conference, the second conference being rescheduled to eliminate a conflict with the first conference.

34. The method of claim 33 wherein scheduling of the first conference is conditional on acceptance of a score based on at least one of:

a. a count of the total number of conferences that would have conflicts with at least one of the schedule of the first conference and the schedule of any rescheduled conference;

b. a count of the total number of at least one of coordinators and participants associated with the first conference and any rescheduled conference; and

c. a transit time associated with at least one of a participant of the first conference and a participant of any rescheduled conference.

35. A method for scheduling a conference among stations of a plurality in accordance with a first request formed at a first station of the plurality, the first request comprising indicia of a plurality of participants and a start time, the method comprising:

a step for maintaining for each participant of the plurality a respective first list of future times;

a step for sending a second request to a second station of the plurality, the second request comprising indicia of at least one particular participant of the plurality of participants and the start time;

a step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective sublist of the first list including times after the start time;



11 a step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective second list of  
12 unavailable times;  
13 a step for intersecting for each participant of the plurality the respective first list  
14 and the respective second list to form a respective availability list;  
15 a step for receiving a response to the second request, the response comprising an  
16 availability list of the particular participant;  
17 a step for intersecting all participant availability lists including the availability list  
18 of the particular participant to form an opportunity list;  
19 a step for forming a proposed schedule of the conference in accordance with a  
20 selected item of the opportunity list;  
21 a step for providing a notice to the second station in accordance with the proposed  
22 schedule; and  
23 a step for scheduling the conference in accordance with a response to the notice.

1 36. A method for conducting a video conference by a system, the system including a  
2 database and at least two conference participant stations, each station comprising means for  
3 inputting audio and means for detecting use by the participant of the means for inputting audio, the  
4 method comprising:

5 a step for recalling from the database a start time for a conference;  
6 a step for detecting use of the respective means for inputting audio of each station;  
7 and  
8 a step for coupling the conference participant stations for the video conference in  
9 accordance with whether use was detected at each station within a respective predetermined time  
10 that includes the start time.

1 37. The method of claim 36 wherein the method further comprises:  
2 a step for presenting a notice at each station that the station has been scheduled  
3 for the conference; and  
4 a step for presenting at each station an instruction for a participant to begin using  
5 the means for inputting audio.

1           38. The method of claim 36 wherein the method further comprises a step for revising the  
2 start time in accordance with failing to detect use of the respective means for inputting audio of  
3 each station within the respective predetermined time.

1           39. The method of claim 36 wherein:  
2           a. the database is stored in part at each station; and  
3           b. the step for recalling is accomplished at each station with reference to a  
4 respective part of the database.

1           40. A method for conducting a video conference by a system, the system including a  
2 database and at least two conference participant stations, each station comprising means for  
3 inputting audio and means for detecting use by the participant of the means for inputting audio, the  
4 method comprising:  
5           a step for determining an end time of a conference in accordance with the  
6 database;  
7           a step for displaying at each station a remaining duration of the conference; and  
8           a step for decoupling the conference participant stations to discontinue video  
9 conferencing in accordance with the end time.

1           41. The method of claim 40 wherein the step for displaying a remaining duration displays a  
2 continuously updated remaining duration.

1           42. The method of claim 40 wherein:  
2           a. the database is stored in part at each station; and  
3           b. the step for determining an end time is accomplished at each station with  
4 reference to a respective part of the database.

1           43. The method of claim 40 further comprising:  
2           a step for presenting at each station an instruction for a participant to cease using  
3 the means for inputting audio; and

- 4 a step for presenting at each station an instruction for the participant to leave the
- 5 station.

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